Book of Sports,

As set forth by

K. *Charles* the I.

WITH

REMARKS.

By the KING.

OUR Dear Father of blessed Memory, in his Return from *Scotland*, coming thro' *Lancashire*, found that his Subjects were debarr'd from Lawful Recreations upon *Sundays* after Evening Prayers ended, and upon Holy-Days: And He prudently consider'd, that if these times were taken from them, the meaner Sort, who labour hard all the Week should have no Recreations at all to refresh their Spirits. And after his *Return*, He farther saw, that his loyal Subjects, in all other parts of his Kingdom, did suffer in the same degree; And did therefore in his Princely Wisdom publish a Declaration to all his loving Subjects concerning Lawful Sports to be used at such times, which was printed and published by his Royal Commandment in the Year 1618. in the *Tenor* which hereafter followeth.

By the KING.

WHereas, upon our Return the last Year out of *Scotland*, we did publish our Pleasure, touching the Recreations of our People in those Parts under our Hand: For some causes us thereunto moving, we have thought good to command these our Directions then given in *Lancashire*, with a few words thereunto added, and most applicable to these parts of our Realms, to be published to all our Subjects.

Whereas we did lately, in our Progress thro' *Lancashire*, rebuke some *Puritans* and precise People, and took order, that the like unlawful punishing of our good People for using their lawful Recreations and honest Exercises upon Sundays and other Holy-Days, after the Afternoons

with that Country is much infected (we mean *Papists* and *Puritans*) have maliciously traduced and calumniated those our just and honourable proceedings. And therefore, lest our Reputation might, upon the one side, (tho' innocently) have some Aspersion laid upon it, and that, upon the other part, our good people in that Country be misled by the mistaking and misinterpretation of our Meaning, we have therefore thought good hereby to clear, and make our pleasure to be manifested to all our good people in those parts.

It is true, that at our first Entry to this Crown and Kingdom, we were informed, and that too truly, that our County of *Lancashire* abounded more in *Popish* Recusants, than any County of *England*, and thus hath still continued since, to our great Regret, with little Amendment, save that now of late, in our last Riding thro' our said Country, we find both by the Report of the Judges, and of the Bishop of that Diocess, that there is some Amendment now daily beginning, which is no small Contentment to us.

The Report of this growing Amendment amongst them, made us the more sorry, when with our own Ears we heard the general Complaint of our people, that they were barred from all lawful Recreation and Exercise upon the *Sundays* Afternoon, after the ending of all Divine Service, which connot but produce two Evils. The one, the hindring the Conversion of many, whom their Priests will take Occasion hereby to vex, persuading them, that no honest Mirth or Recreation is lawful or tolerable in our *Religion*, which cannot but breed a great Discontentment in our peoples Hearts, especially of such as are peradventure upon the point of turning. The other Inconvenience is, that this prohibition bareth the common and Meaner sort of people from using all such Exercises as may make their Bodies more able for War, when we, or our Successors shall have Occasion to use them; and in place thereof, sets up filthy Tiplings and Drunkenness, and breeds a number of discontented and idle Speeches in their Ale-Houses. For when shall the common-people have leave to Exercise, if not upon *Sundays* or Holy-days, seeing they must apply their Labour, and win their living in all Working-Days?

Our express pleasure therefore is, That the Laws of our Kingdom, and Canons of our Church, be as well observed in that County, as in all other places of this our Kingdom. And on the other part, that no lawful Recreation shall be barred to our good people, which shall not tend to

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the Breach of our aforesaid Laws, and Canons of our Church. Which, to express more particularly, our Pleasure is, that the Bishop and all other inferior Church-men and Church-wardens, shall for their parts be careful and diligent, both to instruct the Ignorant, and convince and reform them that are misled in Religion, presenting them that will not conform themselves, but obstinately stand out, to our Judges and Justices. Whom we likewise command to put the Law in due Execution against them.

Our Pleasure likewise is, That the Bishop of that Dioces take the like straight Order with all the *Puritans* and *Precisians* within the same, either constraining them to conform themselves, or to leave the Country according to the Laws of our Kingdom, and Canons of our Church, and so to strike equally on both Hands, against the Contemners of our Authority, and Adversaries of our Church. And as for our good peoples lawful Recreation, our Pleasure likewise is, that after the end of Divine Service our good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawful Recreation, such as Dancing either Men or Women, Archery for Men, Leaping, Vaulting, or any other such harmless Recreation, nor from having of May-Games, Whitson-Ales, and Morris-Dances, and the setting up of May-poles and other Sports therewith used, so as the same be had in due and convenient Time without impediment or Neglect of Divine Service: And that women shall have leave to carry Rushes to the Church for the Decoring of it, according to their old Custom. But withal, we do here Account strillas prohibited, all unlawful Games to be used upon *Sundays* only, as Bear and Bull-baitings, Interludes, and at all time meaner sort of people as by Law prohibited, Bowling.

And likewise we bar from this Benefit and Liberty, all such known Recusants, either of Men or Women, as will abstain from coming to Church or Divine-Service, being therefore unworthy of any lawful Recreation after the said Service, that will not first come to the Church, and serve God: Prohibiting in like Sort, the said Recreations to any that though conform in Religion, are not present in the Church at the Service of God, before their going to the said Recreations. Our Pleasure likewise is, that they to whom it belongeth in Office, shall present and, sharply punish all such as in Abuse of this our Liberty, will use their Exercises before the Ends of all Divine-Services for that day. And we likewise straightly command, that every Person shall resort

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to his own Parish Church to hear Divine-Service, & each Parish by it self to use the said Recreations after *Divine Service*. Prohibiting likewise any offensive Weapons to be carried or used in the said times of Recreations. And our pleasure is, that this our Declaration shall be published by order from the Bishop of the Dioceſs, through all the parish Churches, and that both our Judges of our Circuit, and our Justices of our Peace be informed thereof.

Given at Our Manor of Greenwich *the Four and Twentieth Day of* May, *in the Sixteenth Year of Our Reign of* England, France *and* Ireland, *and of* Scotland *the One and Fiftieth.*

NOW out of a like pious Care for the Service of God and for suppreſſing of any Humours that oppoſe Truth, and for the Eaſe Comfort and Recreation of our well deſerving people, we do ratifie and publiſh this our bleſſed Father's Declaration: The rather becauſe of late in ſome Counties of our Kingdom, we find, that under pretence of taking away Abuſes, there hath been a general Forbidding not only of ordinary Meetings, but of the Feaſt of the Dedication of the Churches, commonly called *Wakes*. Now our expreſs will and pleaſure is, that theſe Feaſts, with others, ſhall be obſerved, and that our Juſtices of the Peace, in their ſeveral Diviſions, ſhall look to it, both that all Diſorders there, may be prevented or puniſhed, and that all Neighbourhood and Freedom, with Man-like and Lawful Exerciſes be uſed. And we farther command our Juſtices of Aſſize, in their ſeveral Circuits, to ſee that no Man do trouble or moleſt any of our loyal and dutiful People for their lawful Recreations, having firſt done their Duty to God, and continuing in Obedience to us and our Laws. And of this we command all our Judges, Juſtices of the Peace as well within Liberties as without; Mayors Baliffs, Conſtables, and other Officers, to take notice of, and to ſee obſerved, as they tender our Diſpleaſure. And we farther Will, that Publication of this our Command be made by Order from the Biſhops through all the Pariſh Churches of their ſeveral Dioceſs reſpectively.

Given at our Palace of Weſtminſter, *the Eighteenth Day of* October *in the Ninth Year of our Reign.*

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Remarks upon the Book of Sports.

THis Book has been ſo much handed about formerly, both in Publick and Private Converſation, and is ſo commonly ſtill made the ſubject of popular Diſcourſe or

Controversy between two contending Parties; being frequently banter'd or branded, on the one Hand, for establishing Iniquity by a Law, and as often also gravely justify'd, on the Other, with a serious warmth for allowing Innocent Recreations on *Sundays*: That it will require some sort of Moderation to reconcile Matters on both sides, and to *Set the Saddle upon the right Horse* (as we say) without giving any Offence designedly to either. So I mean, as the Memory of King Charles the First may not be inconsiderately patter'd or traduc'd, between Jest and Earnest, nor popularly inodiated by the rash Prejudices of a mistaken Zeal mutually engag'd upon this Affair.

Now this New Edition of the Book of Sports is as far from being design'd to trump up any new matter of dispute between the Church and the Conventicle, as to give any Countenance to a Kind of Spiritual pastimes, or what are call'd lawful Recreations on the Lord's Day: For tho' I could never think *Dancing*, *Cudgelling*, *Coaching*, *Tipling*, playing at *Cards* or any other *Gamboling Diversions* proper for that Sacred and Solemn Day, but as profane and Immortal, on the contrary, as ever any honest *Dissenter* has hitherto represented them to the World; yet I must believe that the Church is no wise concern'd now-a-days, either for encouraging or tolerating any such scandalous Levities, Lewdness, or Libertinism by a Law. Surely no people of what party or perswasion soever in their right Wits (except the Papists) would be for granting a *License* to Sin, or to break the Sabbath. But it is to be hoped, that what Liberties of this Kind have been formerly given, may never be so allowed again by *Royal Authority*.

However it will be worth while here to enquire when such Licentiousness first took footing in particular, and how it came afterwards to be generally propagated throughout *England*. And therefore the first Remark I shall make upon it is this; That King *James* the First having a great Desire to oblige his good people of *Lancashire*, he would not have them debarred from Lawful Recreations on *Sundays* after Evening prayers and upon Holy-days; considering, that if these Times were taken from them, the meaner sort, who labour hard all the Week, should have no Recreations at all to refresh their Spirits: So that he published a Declaration, concerning Lawful Sports to be used at such Times, by his Royal pleasure and prerogative, in the Year 1618. Now, it seems the *Lancashire* People had complain'd

grievously to King *James* the First, as he was once returning through that Country from *Scotland*, against the severity of the Puritans and other precise persons; in strictly prohibiting, and unlawfully punishing many of them for using lawful Recreations and honest Exercises upon Sundays and other Holy days, after the Afternoon Sermon, or Evening Service. So that the King then looking upon this as a Grievance, presently thought fit to redress it by his Royal Authority in this manner, for the Satisfaction of his beloved Subjects there.

But afterwards finding what good Effects, the granting of these particular Priviledges and Pastimes had upon many Papists in that Country to bring them to Church, he was further encourag'd to make the same Declaration of Sports Universal thro' the whole Kingdom; being chiefly mov'd thereto for two very good REASONS, to the best of his Thinking, or Prince like Wisdom.

The One was, *That the Prohibition of all lawful Recreations, or Exercises upon Sundays after all Divine Service being over in the Evening, would very much discourage at least, if not absolutely prevent the Conversion of many Well disposed Papists, and peradventure upon the very point of Turning too at that time: For because their Priests might take Occasion from hence to persuade them to the contrary, by telling them that they would be cramp'd in their liberties, and that no honest Mirth or Recreation was lawful or tolerable in our Religion.* The other Motive the King had to make such a Declaration, was for this Reason; *That it would remove a publick Inconvenience: For he thought it an Impolitick Thing, to debar the Common and Meaner sort of people, from using such Exercises as might make their Bodies more able for War, when He or His Successors should have occasion to use them. Besides by being hinder'd from such Innocent and Manly Sports, the Vulgar people were apt to follow filthy Drunken Tiplings, and breed abundance of idle discontented Speeches in Ale-houses, for want of better Exercise. And therefore it was his Royal pleasure, &c. having a Regard still to the Laws of the Land, and the Canons of the Church, which were not hereby to be infring'd in the least: That after Divine Service on Sundays at Even, People might lawfully use* Dancing, Archery, Leaping, Vaulting, May-Games, Whitson-Ales, Morris-Dances, May-poles, &c. *Provided yet that no Unlawful Games should be used at such set Times of Recreation, as Bear and Bull-baitings, Interludes and Bowling, as by Law prohibited in the meaner sort of people at all times before; provided also, That no Offensive Weapons should be carry'd or us'd in the said Times of Recreations.*

And thus you have the very Substance and Soul of the Declaration: Only observe further, that all Puritans, Precisians, and Recusants, all Dissenters and Absenters whatsoever from the Church or Divine Service, were to be as quotes (or for ever, if they came or conform'd to the Church) barr'd from the Benefit and Liberty of the aforesaid Recreations for that Day. But I shall not enquire into the Merits of the Cause here, nor determine yet how far humane policy or the Wisdom of Princes can lawfully interfere with Divine Institutions, or cancel the Laws of God; Whether the Emergencies of State, or the Diversion of people ought to come in Competition with Religion, I leave the World to judge.

Be it as it will now as to that matter; we find afterwards that King Charles *the First, out of a like Pious Care for the Service of God, as well as for the suppressing any Humours that oppose Truth, and for the Ease, Comfort, or Recreation of his Well-deserving People, did also ratifie and publish the above-mentioned Declaration, with a Rider, tho' not altogether to the same purpose or drift, but because he found that under a pretence of taking away Abuses, there had been a General Forbidding, not only of ordinary Meetings, but of the Feasts of the Dedication of Churches, commonly called* Wakes. *And therefore he thought fit, according to his good Pleasure and great Wisdom, to allow those Feasts to be observ'd still, as well as to permit all Manner like and Lawful Exercises to be used in like manner without any Molestation or Hindrance.*

I cannot but think this Declaration of Sports a very favourable Case on the King's side, and that it justly requires a Candid Construction at the Hands of all unprejudic'd or impartial perusers. But besides, I appeal to the Learned, whether God Almighty did not permit some loose Things in the Jewish Government to be establish'd by a Law, for the hardness of Peoples Hearts, thro' many troublesome Importunities; which Things yet he neither did nor could approve, being highly injurious to Heaven, and deregatory to his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. This I mention only by the by as an Allusion, not altogether impertinent (I hope) to the purpose, nor prophane. However, when I call to mind that excellent incomparable Expression in the Holy Scripture *Take away the Evil Counsellers and the King shall live*: I cannot but think it very a *propos*, very apposite to the Pious King's Case and Condition, upon this occasion, under the Influence of a persuasive Ministry, and an easie, gracious, good Temper, to say the worst on't. The sum of all is, he was ill advis'd to be sure, tho' it ought not be believed at the same

same time in common Charity, that ever an Arch-Bishop had any hand in the Book of Sports; either in advising or Composing, Printing, and Publishing such wanton Pranks, or ludicrous Gamboles to be exercis'd on the Lords-day; a Day of Rest from Lewdness as well as Labour. But however, let us put this Book of Sports in the Ballance now with the Liberties of latter Days, and compare it with Hackney-Coaches driving on Sundays, Fitting out Ships, Printing of News; and all as if it were the Old Game over again, *The better Day the better Deed*: And I have nothing further to say towards moderating of Matters.

Thank GOD! We have a good and Gracious QUEEN at this Time, who is happy in a more Faithful Unbesigning Ministry, than former Reigns could ever yet boast of: Her Councils are secret at Home, and her Successes certain Abroad upon this Account. Let other Princes Glory in Vice, Tyranny, and Oppression, while She Triumphs only in Vertue, Peace and Plenty. 'Tis She that eminently Discountenances, all Prophaness and Immorality by Her own personal Practice, and most Illustrious Example of Piety and pure Religon in the Kingdom.

For By Miracle King *William* set us free,
And still by Miracles we're sav'd you see,
England's the Fortunate the Happy Isle,
With Freedom blest, and with a Fruitful Soil
Whose Laws and Freedoms just and righteous are,
And every Man the meanest has a share.
Here shall my Muse to after Ages sing
The bravest People and the Happiest Queen:
By noblest of Princes the Royal Queen *ANNE*
Who now doth preserve and Rule Lofty *Britain*,
The chief of all Females, the Faiths great Defender,
May Honour and Victory always attend HER,
The Scourge of all *Tirants*, the Protestant Mother
Who traces the *Steps* of Her Heroick BROTHER
The Pride of Her Kingdoms, the Head of the *Alliance*,
Who holds the proud *Pope* and *Le-Grand* in *Defiance*
More Wise than *Minerva*, more chast than *Sulanna*,
The Glory of *Europe*, Great conquering *ANNA*.

☞ *Note*, this was Printed in 1633, by *Robert Barker*, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, and Re-printed in the Year 1710, by *J. Baker* in *Peter-House Yard*.

FINIS.